

OUR HERITAGE

The Delaware Library Centennial celebrates the dramatic progress that has been made over the past 100 years in the development of library and information services throughout Delaware's communities.

The Centennial also commemorates the founding of The State Library Commission for the State of Delaware, which was established on March 9, 1901. This act, which provided for the establishment and maintenance of free public libraries through the school districts, was made possible through the advocacy of the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

As we reflect on the past century, the American Library Association National Advocacy Honor Roll, which honors the Extraordinary Delaware Library Advocates of the 20th Century, serves as our vehicle to trace the history of Delaware accomplishments.

Extraordinary Delaware Library Advocates of the 20th Century

Florence Bayard Kane was the first Delaware State Librarian, appointed to head the Delaware State Library Commission. A graduate of the Drexel Institute Library School, she published pamphlets on "Free Libraries in Delaware," organized rural routes in 1909 for book wagons called Traveling Libraries, and gave lectures around the State of Delaware regarding libraries. In the *Handbook of the State Library Commission* for the State of Delaware, compiled in 1904, Mrs. Kane wrote:

"It is sadly true that those most in need of good reading demand it least, but herein lies our work, to convert that need into a demand and minister to it. It can be done; it has been done. I have living, breathing statistics to prove that readers of the best books are being made every day; could quote from grateful, joyful letters of thanks from the recipients of the State's little libraries, inadequate as they are."

Mary L. Hopkins, affectionately known as "Miss Mame," was one of Delaware's book wagon pioneers in the early 20th Century. Her route was 48 miles and it took three days to serve her rural patrons. In *The Story of a Book Wagon*, it was stated, "It is the conviction of the Commission that any good State library system must carry books to the homes and seek the people until the people eagerly seek the books." The Delaware Public Library Commission said of Mrs. Hopkins, "she not only gave valuable library service, but she gave of herself to the extent that her influence will be felt for many years in Sussex County."

Helen Bennett was appointed as the first Supervisor of School Libraries at the Delaware Department of Public Instruction in 1963. Mrs. Bennett was dedicated to the development and advancement of school library services and school librarians. She established a scholarship endowment and left her estate to the Delaware Library Association to support the training of professional school librarians.

Susan Brynteson, director of Libraries at the University of Delaware since 1980, has a distinguished record of service at both the state and national levels. An innovative leader, she established the first automated library system in Delaware, encouraged her staff to be active in local and national library organizations, and made the Hugh M. Morris Library of the University of Delaware a valuable resource for all Delawareans. As chair of the Delaware Library Association's Legislative Action Committee, she led community initiatives to improve public libraries. At the national level, she served on the Information Policies Committee of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Association of College and Research Libraries, and has been active with the Coalition for Networked Information.

During her service as State Representative and as a member of the Joint Finance Committee, *Ada Leigh Soles* was chief sponsor of Delaware's first state standards law for libraries. In addition, she championed the first state funding for public libraries, which continues to benefit all Delawareans. Mrs. Soles continues to be a source of inspiration for librarians and for all who love learning.

Congressman Michael N. Castle was the recipient of the 1998 Legislator Award from the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (WHCLIST) for his leadership in co-authoring a bipartisan letter to support ESEA Title VI funding supporting public school libraries. He was a strong supporter of the Library Services & Construction Act (LSCA), which provided significant funding for construction projects for public libraries in Delaware. He has also been a key supporter of the Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and an advocate for affordable telecommunication rates for libraries and schools to access state, national, and international information networks. He received the Distinguished Service Citation from the Delaware Library Association in 1997 for his ongoing support of Delaware libraries.

Tom W. Sloan, Delaware State Librarian during the 1990's, was the recipient of the DLA 2000 Distinguished Librarian Citation for providing a decade of outstanding leadership for Delaware libraries. He provided leadership in advancing Delaware libraries into the Information Age through the automation and linking of libraries through the Delaware Library Information Network, and through the creation of *DelAWARE: The Digital Library of the First State* (www.lib.de.us), which was launched on October 17, 1996. He also provided learning opportunities for the library community through the establishment of the Librarian/Archivist Scholarship Loan Program and the Delaware Library Technology Education Center.

Mr. Sloan provided leadership in organizing the library community to implement An Action Agenda For Delaware Libraries, the catalyst for a multitude of statewide library cooperative initiatives. This long range plan for improving Delaware's libraries was the result of a statewide effort, initiated as a part of Delaware's participation in the 1991 White House Conference on Libraries. The Action Agenda Implementation Committee (AAIC) was appointed by Governor Thomas R. Carper in April 1993 to carry out the recommendations of An Action Agenda for Delaware Libraries. The AAIC was successful in achieving full implementation of the Action Agenda by the year 2000.

Delaware State Librarians

Florence Bayard Kane
Thomas W. Wilson
Ida V. Culbreth
Bernice Hammond
Anne W. W. Bell
Virginia F. K. Messick
Raymond W. Smith
Frederick W. Smith
Delma Batton
Dr. Frank A. Schneider
Jack Tyler
Sylvia Short
Louise Wych
Robert Dugan
Tom W. Sloan
Mary L. Chute

